

## Farming the Home Place: a Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982

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What Jellison has accomplished with this book is to provide a broad survey of farm women's labor, government agricultural policy, social ideology about farm women's role, and the adoption and adaptation of technology and its impact on agriculture and the work of farm women in the Midwest. She has defined the major changes of the time period and has begun to define significant similarities and differences in the lives of farm and urban women. Her book, which is both sophisticated and accessible, is a significant contribution for this new field.

*Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982*, by Valerie J. Matsumoto. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993. ix, 262 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY MARK FRIEDBERGER, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

*Farming the Home Place* is far more wide ranging than its title implies. The author has stretched the concept of community beyond the small Japanese-American farming area in California's Central Valley which provides its base. Essentially, the book is about how a marginal ethnic group merged into the mainstream of American society despite the extreme stress of internment during World War II.

Matsumoto charts the struggles of the early years of the Cortez Colony, where pioneer farm families battled racism and legal barriers to set up small vegetable and fruit operations in a harsh environment. She shows how foreign-born farmers registered land in the names of their native-born children to avoid discriminatory land ownership regulations; how good business sense led the colony to found the Cortez Growers Association, which was connected to the efficient marketing structures that were part of California's agribusiness make-up in the first half of the century; how the Cortez growers arranged for their farms to be cared for by an Anglo business agent while they were interned; and how, despite vicious vigilantism after their release, they reweave the web of community in Cortez and embarked on a modernization program that included the mechanization of their farms and a shift to orchard crops such as almonds.

Japanese Americans went into agriculture in the early twentieth century because opportunities were blocked in urban occupations. They saw farming as a means to achieve success and respectability. At the same time, California's agriculture saw a variety of other ethnic groups, not ordinarily associated with agriculture in other regions of the country, move into farming for the same reasons. The Portuguese in dairying, Punjabis in cotton, and Croatians in grapes all became

successful farmers after World War II. They gained the respect of Anglo landowners who desired them as tenants because their work ethic was so strong. However, none had to struggle harder than the Japanese before World War II, and, of course, none underwent the tragic and humiliating experience of internment. The fact that the Cortez Colony was revived after internment, and the Japanese Americans continued to produce crops, was a tribute to their hardbitten resilience.

One of the secrets of success of all ethnic farmers in the Central Valley in the twentieth century was their use of family labor as far as it was practical. The Japanese came under fire from nativists because they allowed wives and older daughters to toil in the fields. Nativists, fearing competition from the hard-working Japanese, preferred to ignore the fact that the Japanese were model citizens: their children thrived in school; they founded and supported institutions such as churches and sports teams; they paid their bills on time; and they produced bountiful crops.

Ironically, after all the struggles, the Sansei (third-generation Japanese) found their ethnic identity and their rural way of life threatened in the postmodern world of late twentieth-century California. Educational achievement had allowed Japanese Americans to become upwardly mobile and to outmarry. Although some Sansei were attracted to the slower pace of life on the farm, and sometimes gave up more lucrative careers to farm the home place, increasingly the tide of agribusiness and large capital-intensive operations made the small Japanese-American fruit farm redundant.

Matsumoto's book, though concerned with subject matter far removed from Iowa, provides a methodological model for those interested in family, community, and ethnic history. Especially valuable is her use of oral evidence, which, combined with a sophisticated understanding and explication of the latest theories of assimilation, makes *Farming the Home Place* a model for family and community history in the nineties.

*Fly in the Buttermilk: The Life Story of Cecil A. Reed*, by Cecil A. Reed with Priscilla Donovan. Iowa Series in North American Autobiography. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993. xxi, 184 pp. Illustrations. \$29.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY HAL S. CHASE, DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Fly in the Buttermilk* is a telling title for this autobiographical account of one of Iowa's most notable twentieth-century African Americans, Cecil A. Reed (1913- ). To Albert E. Stone, editor of the Iowa Series

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